

Claiming national identity

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Claiming National Identity

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Claiming National Identity

ABSTRACT

Using data from the British and Scottish Social Attitudes surveys 2006, this article examines the willingness of people living and born in England and Scotland to accept or reject claims to national identity made by those living in but not born in the appropriate territory. It compares the way claims employing key markers, notably birthplace, accent, parentage, and ‘race’ are received in the two countries. It is a significant finding that the results for the two countries do not differ greatly. National identity, thinking of oneself as ‘exclusively national’, is the critical criterion explaining the extent to which respondents reject claims, while there is a modest educational effect, if the respondent does not have a university degree. National identity is not to be equated with citizenship but involves cultural markers of birth, ancestry, and accent as well as residence. Understanding how people identify and use markers of national identity is not as straightforward as politicians in particular believe and imply.

KEYWORDS

National identity claims; identity markers; English; Scottish; British; ‘race’

CLAIMING NATIONAL IDENTITYⁱ

David McCrone and Frank Bechhofer

Introduction

Over more than a decade, we have developed a model of how people think of themselves in terms of national identity, how they employ what we have called identity markers, and the processes involved in claiming national identity, as well as the reception of these claims by others. Our early work was based on ‘qualitative’ research, in particular intensive interviews with significant others (landed and arts elites), and with people living in ‘debatable lands’ along the Scottish-English border. In a previous paper in this journal (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2008), we argued that one’s national identity is greatly affected by how one’s claims are regarded by others. If you claim a particular national identity, and your claim is rejected, it has the potential to lead to social exclusion. In that paper, our findings were based on a set of exploratory survey questions asked in the Scottish and British Social Attitudes surveys for 2003.

In the Scottish Social Attitudes survey of 2005, we used a more extensive and sophisticated set of questions confined to Scotland only. Given that, arguably, the future of the United Kingdom rests on how both the Scots *and* the English do identity politicsⁱⁱ, it was important to extend our survey work to England. In the Scottish and British Social Attitudes surveys of 2006 we investigated how claims to Scottish *and* English national identities were accepted or rejected. This article reports on these findings.

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We start from the common assumption that Scots and English people have different ways of ‘doing’ national identity (Kumar, 2003: Weight, 2002). Whereas the Scots forefront being Scottish over being British, the English are believed to be less concerned with, or even confused about ‘national’ (i.e. English) identity. The implication might be that Scots are likely to take a more restrictive view of claims to be Scottish than the English do of claims to be English. A related question is, if national identity is important in judging claims, is it more important in Scotland than in England? Also, in both nations, do other factors such as a respondent’s social class, education, age or gender attenuate or even supersede the effects of national identity?

The second set of issues we will examine is concerned with how ‘race’ affects claims to be ‘national’ in the two countries. We might expect that Scots will be *less* likely to accept claims from non-white persons to be Scottish, given both the importance Scots attach to national identity, and the fact that there are fewer non-whites living there (2% compared with 9% in England). In other words, ‘Scottish’ is possibly more likely to equate with ‘being white’. On the other hand, our previous work did discover that ‘being English’ was more of barrier to being taken for Scottish than being non-white (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2008: 1261).

Identity Markers And Rules

In our approach to national identity, we define markers as ‘those social characteristics presented to others to support a national identity claim and looked to in others, either to attribute national identity, or receive and assess any claims or attributions made’ (Kiely et al., 2001: 35-6). People receive and consider the

claims and attributions of others, as well as claiming and attributing identity themselves. When we talk about ‘choosing’ identities, we imply that people create their national identity for themselves, rather than simply equating it with citizenship. In other words, they can choose how they ‘present’ themselves in national identity termsⁱⁱⁱ. In a British context, as well as having formal ‘British’ citizenship (reflected in having the state passport), the peoples of the UK have available to them ‘national’ identities in the form of being English, Scottish, Welsh and (Northern) Irish from which they can choose. People may also combine ‘state’ and ‘national’ identities by saying they are English more than British, Scottish not British, equally British and Welsh, and so on.

What happens when, explicitly or implicitly, people make a claim about their identity to one or more others in a particular situation? These others may accept or reject that claim, and they too may do so implicitly or explicitly. In interviews, people have sometimes told us that they would never explicitly reject a claim, because people are entitled to call themselves English or Scottish if they so wish and it is unnecessary or churlish to challenge them. Other people are more forthright in their views. But, as in all forms of interaction, people anticipate responses and may modify their claims, or not make them at all if they fear rejection. That is why identity markers are important. We know from extensive qualitative research in a diversity of situations that the crucial ones are birth, accent, parentage (sometimes extending backwards in time as ancestry), and residence; at least, these are the ones people cite most often. More recently we have examined the impact of ‘race’ in the form of white and non-white, because

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research was showing that non-white people confronted national identity differently than white people (Alibhai-Brown, 2000; ONS, 2008).

As we set out previously (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2008), there are ‘identity rules’ which are probabilistic rules of thumb which guide, rather than enforce, judgements about who is, or is not, one of us (Kiely et al., 2001). Markers and rules are usually implicit and taken-for-granted, only coming to the fore more explicitly when something is problematic and contested about them.

Our initial focus was on how individuals construct their own national identities, and in particular the markers they use, and our intensive interviews indicated that national identity was often matter-of-fact, and in Billig’s terms (1995), banal, and taken-for-granted. Most of the time people have no reason to ask themselves questions about their own national identity; they are what they are, usually on the basis of where they were born. However, in the course of lengthy face to face interviews they were able and willing to explore their sense of national identity in considerable detail, discussing, as we outlined above, markers such as place of birth, parentage, upbringing, and place of residence. We explored how they might *attribute* national identity to ‘others’, and the processes whereby they made judgments about other people’s claims. Broadly the processes of self-identification and claims to identity, are similar to those of attribution and acceptance or rejection of claims.

At this stage, we should caution the reader against too readily classifying these markers as ‘ethnic’ or ‘civic’^{iv}. In a previous paper (Kiely et al., 2005: 152), we pointed out that ‘to contrast ethnic with civic conceptions [of the nation] is to oppose ideal types. When markers such as birth, ancestry and residence are used

in practice they may not be seen as representations of either civic or ethnic identity but subtler combinations of the two'. As Jonathan Hearn has argued, the distinction between ethnic and civic has more to do with opposing styles of argument than with measurable concepts (Hearn, 2000: 94).

Surveying National Identity Claims

Following on from our qualitative studies, we have been developing and refining an approach to studying identity using survey methodology, not because we doubt the findings from our qualitative studies or think a quantitative approach superior; research methods should not be seen as competing but as illuminating questions in different ways. Qualitative methods vary: interviews fall on a continuum from unstructured to structured, they may be non-directive or more focused in varying ways, based on individuals or groups and we have rung the changes in our work. Surveys provide data on large samples, helping us assess how representative findings are, and, perhaps more importantly, provide another perspective on the way people view national identity. There is a considerable methodological literature on 'triangulation', a phrase first used by Norman Denzin (1970). The basic idea is that one can be more confident about findings if different methods lead to the same result. For an extended discussion see Bechhofer and Paterson (2000: chapter 5).

We knew from our qualitative work that place of birth is the main criterion on which people's claims are judged, and that accent is of importance in face to face interaction. So, in the Scottish and British Social Attitudes surveys of 2003 we designed broadly equivalent questions of a very straightforward sort, first asking

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respondents living in England whether they would accept a claim to be English from a person *born in Scotland*, and *living now* in England; and respondents living in Scotland whether they would accept a claim to be Scottish from a person *born in England*, but *now living in Scotland*. The questions were refined by adding further conditions: whether the person was white or non-white^v; and whether or not they had the appropriate accent (English in the English case; Scottish in the Scottish case). We found in this and subsequent work that skilled interviewers using show cards could take people through a series of questions introducing new markers and that they reported few problems. The aim was to find the ‘tipping point’ at which respondents shifted from rejecting someone’s claim to accepting it.

There is a school of thought, represented for instance by Susan Condor and her colleagues which argues that surveys are not good instruments for getting at national identity, preferring a ‘non-reactive’ interview technique to avoid ‘priming respondents’ (Condor, 2006:662). Of course such interviews elicit more ‘naturalistic’ responses and give us far greater access to *meaning*. Susan Condor and her colleagues were part of a large team, financed by The Leverhulme Trust and co-ordinated by the authors, investigating constitutional change and national identity over an extended period. We worked closely together on intensive interviews in England (carried out by them) and in Scotland (carried out by us) and used quite similar approaches and sets of questions.

Because there clearly is some force in the arguments against surveys and especially against the use of pre-determined questions to investigate national identity, it is important to make two points here^{vi}. These question were *not* pre-

determined in the sense that they were dreamed up *a priori*, but are based on extensive material from non-directive interviews. Secondly, if it is accepted that methodological triangulation is a worthwhile procedure, one has to formalise the questions because that is the essence of the survey method.

In 2006, we refined and extended the suite of questions to cover birthplace, residence, accent and 'race' in both England and Scotland. To sharpen the analysis, we focused it on respondents who were 'natives', that is, people born and currently residing in the country^{vii}. What added piquancy to this wave of surveys was the apparent rise in England in the proportions willing to claim to be English. National identity has in the last few years changed significantly more in England than in Scotland, notably in a shift away from Britishness (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008). Table 1 shows change between 2003 and 2006 in three measures of national identity:

Multiple choice where respondents can choose *more than one* from a list

Forced choice where respondents can choose *only one* from a list

The rather more subtle Moreno question where respondents place themselves on a five point Likert scale running between (for example) English not British and British not English^{viii}.

Table 1 about here

The rise in English identity in only three years as measured by the first two indicators is striking. The Moreno results show a small fall in the stronger English identities of 'only or mainly English' but there is a clear rise in the category of

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‘equally English and British’, some at least of which must come from the ‘more British than English’ category. In Scotland there is a clear ceiling effect which precludes any dramatic change. This strengthening of Englishness has the potential to cut two ways: ‘English’ might become a more overt form of national identity, heightening any tendency to reject claims from those thought not to be ‘one of us’; on the other hand, opening up the category of ‘English’ might allow immigrants to have their claims more readily accepted. We shall address this question later in this paper.

How might respondents react as regards claims? Would we expect Scots, with their stronger and more explicit sense of national identity, to be more or less accepting of claims to be Scottish from a person not born in Scotland? On the one hand, they may take the exclusionary view that this is a key marker of being Scottish; if you don’t have it, you’re not ‘one of us’. On the other hand, being Scottish may be thought of as an inclusive club with a low entry tariff. ‘Big tent’ Scottishness, such that everyone living in the country has a claim, is favoured by political parties, especially government (e.g. helping to create and promote a ‘fair, inclusive Scotland’). What of England? Although a sense of Englishness has strengthened in recent years, research suggests that Englishness is implicit, ambivalent and fractionated^{ix} (Condor and Abell, 2006). Comparing the two societies, research tends to show that ‘ethnic minorities’ in Scotland are more likely to use ‘Scottish’ in their descriptors (as in ‘Scottish Muslim’) (Hussain and Millar, 2006), whereas similar groups in England call themselves ‘British’ rather than ‘English’ (Office for National Statistics, 2008). It could be, of course, that

what marks out Englishness is apathy; if that's how you want to think of yourself, then so be it; it's not that important.

Accepting And Rejecting Claims In England And Scotland

The basic approach asks respondents born in England or Scotland to accept or reject a sequence of ever stronger and more plausible claims made by a person born in the other country.

Acceptance and rejection of claims in England

Respondents in England in BSA 2006 were asked:

'I'd like you to think of a white person who you know was born in Scotland, but now lives permanently in England. This person says they are English. Would you consider this person to be English?' They were given a card showing four possible responses plus Don't Know. These were: Definitely would; Probably would; Probably would not; Definitely would not

Respondents, except those who said 'Definitely would', were then asked (and offered the same choices): 'What if they had an English accent? Would you consider them to be English?'

Finally, excepting those who said 'Definitely would' to the previous question, they were asked: 'And what if this person with an English accent also had English parents? Would you consider them to be English?'

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The initial question sets the barrier high because the hypothetical person is born in Scotland and lacks what previous research has told us is the crucial marker of birth, only possessing the relatively weak marker of permanent residence^x. However, the second question introduces accent, often used in real-life interactions, although the inferences which people may base on it are varied and unreliable. Possessing the ‘appropriate’ accent strengthens the claim because the respondent may infer that the person’s birth in Scotland was what interview respondents often called ‘an accident of birth’ and the person ‘should’ have been born south of the border, being born in Scotland for medical reasons or on a brief visit to Scotland. Others may be born in Scotland because their parents are currently living there, move to England when very young and acquire the accent as part of growing up; long-term permanent residence from childhood is often taken to confer national identity. Finally respondents may infer on the basis of the accent that people had at least one English parent. The third question makes parentage explicit and thus drops the barrier quite low. In Scotland, the corresponding questions have the person born in England and claiming to be Scottish on grounds of permanent residence, followed by residence and accent, followed by residence, accent and parentage.

We followed this battery with three further questions, identical except that the person was now stated to be non-white. Table 2 gives the results.

Table 2 about here

We shall focus on the proportions above and below the mid-point and would urge caution in making too much of the difference between 'definitely would' and 'probably would'. The effect of successively lowering the barrier to acceptance is clear for whites and non-whites alike. If the only claim to English identity is permanent residence, less than half (45%) would probably or definitely accept the claim of a white person. Introduce the 'appropriate' accent and that rises to 60 per cent. The ability to claim English parents results in an even larger increase with four out of five people accepting the claim (81%). The one in six people (17%) rejecting even the strongest claim almost certainly reflects the importance of the birth criterion.

The figures for the hypothetical non-white person are similar, with any sizeable difference only occurring when parentage is introduced. At this point the claims of whites are nine per cent more likely to be accepted than non-whites. There may, then, be some 'racism' involved. Assessing the meaning of these data is however not straightforward. First, it may be that some people were less than truthful because they sensed the question might be tapping racism. A further complication is that the line between 'prejudice' and 'discrimination' is a fine one and we cannot tell whether those who say they would not accept a non-white claim would act differently towards the person as a result^{xi}. For instance, we know that there is reluctance for non-white persons to describe themselves as English even to those willing to accept them as British and defend their civic rights. The Office of National Statistics observes: 'People from the White British group were more likely to describe their national identity as English (58 per cent) rather than British (36 per cent). However, the opposite was true of the non-white groups,

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who were more likely to identify themselves as British.^{xii} In practice, then, respondents would only infrequently have encountered such a non-white person born in Scotland making the claim to be English.

Acceptance and rejection of claims in Scotland

So, do things look different in Scotland? The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3 about here

We see the same general effect. Progressively lowering the barriers steadily increases the acceptance rate, and again the biggest leap is between the second and third columns when parentage is introduced; a rise of 23 per cent for white claimants and rather less, 18 per cent, for non-white. Once again there is some evidence of prejudice against the non-whites, already 8 per cent when accent is introduced and rising to 13 per cent when parentage is brought into the picture.

We might have expected greater differences between England and Scotland because Scottish nationals are more inclined to choose Scottish national identity than their counterparts in England are to choose English national identity (see Table 1). The non-white proportion of the population is also much smaller in Scotland, though this could cut both ways. Greater familiarity with non-white persons could lead to greater tolerance and willingness to accept them as English in England; or on the other hand the much lower numbers in Scotland might make the issue of ‘race’ far less salient. If we look at the rejection rates in the two countries, the conclusion must be that the differences are minimal. As regards the

claims of white persons, in no case is the differential more than 3 points, and it declines further as the barriers to acceptance are lowered. The rejection rates in Scotland compared with England for non-white persons are larger (-8, -7, and -4 respectively) but once more they decline steadily as indicators of national identity are added. The two countries are similar in their willingness to accept or reject claims made by people born in the 'other' country regardless of whether they are white or non-white, albeit the data do suggest slightly greater prejudice in Scotland. We shall return to this briefly later in this paper.

Who Is Most Likely To Reject Claims?

We now examine whether some groups of people are more likely to reject the claims than others and, again, whether England and Scotland differ in this regard given their overall similarity. We have collapsed the 4-point scale (definitely accept, probably accept, probably reject, definitely reject) into 'accept' and 'reject', and the figures in the tables are the proportions *rejecting* the claim.

National identity

We turn first to examine the effect of respondents' national identity.

Table 4 about here

The national identity of those assessing the claims does make a difference. In England the proportion rejecting the claim is greater for those seeing themselves as English. The decline is not smooth with those who place equal or greater

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emphasis on being British broadly more similar to each other. It is the ‘exclusively English’ and the ‘predominantly English’ that stand out. In Scotland, at first glance, the situation appears to be less straightforward. However, few – only 4 per cent - emphasise their Britishness (the bottom two rows) and those results have to be treated with great caution. Ignoring those two rows, the distribution in Scotland is again very similar to that in England. The ‘exclusively Scottish’ rejection rate differs very little from the ‘exclusively English’, the ‘more Scottish than British’ group are slightly more accepting than their English counterparts while those saying their national and British identity are equal again differ very little. In both countries, a strong national identity makes one less willing to accept claims.

Table 5 about here

The same general pattern is repeated for claims by non-whites. Table 5 gives the data. The bottom three categories in England are very similar and show levels of rejection well below the top two categories. The ‘exclusively English’ show high levels of rejection as do, albeit slightly lower, the ‘predominantly English’ category. Bearing in mind the small numbers in the bottom two categories in Scotland, we once again see similarity rather than difference between the two countries.

Looked at in terms of white and non-white, 68 per cent of ‘exclusive Scots’ and 69 per cent of ‘exclusive English’ would reject the claim of non-whites based purely on residence. This figure is not much greater than the 64 per cent for

whites found in both countries. Once we introduce accent and parentage, these figures fall to 37 per cent and 39 per cent respectively, but these are 15 per cent and 13 per cent higher than the figures for whites. The corresponding differentials for the predominantly national 'English/Scottish more than British' group are 9 per cent and 10 per cent. That almost 4 in 10 self-defining 'exclusive nationals' in both countries would reject the claim of a non-white person even with the appropriate accent and parentage, simply because they were born in the other country is cause for concern. So is the fact that among the slightly less national 'English/Scottish more than British' group as many as 29 per cent in England, and 25 per cent in Scotland would also reject this claim. One might ask what a non-white person could do to overcome the twin accidents of 'race' and birthplace when it comes to being accepted as English or a Scot, for the tendency to reject is virtually the same in the two countries.

Education

The other variable which makes an ostensible difference to whether or not respondents reject claims is education (see tables A1 and A2 in appendix). The gradients are not perfectly smooth but the overall picture is clear. The higher the level of education attained by the respondent, the less likely they are to reject the claim, whether by a white or a non-white, and almost regardless of its basis – 'race', accent or parentage. Thus, while 8 per cent of English people with degrees would reject the claim of a white person, born in Scotland, but with English accent and parents, 23 per cent of those with no educational qualifications would reject such a claim. In Scotland, the figures are 10 per cent and 26 per cent

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respectively. Those with no qualifications in Scotland are somewhat more likely to reject non-white claims than their counterparts in England. Thus, while 13 per cent of English degree holders would reject a similar claim from a non-white person, compared with 37 per cent among those with no educational qualifications, the comparable figures among Scots are 17 per cent and 44 per cent respectively.

Age

Age of respondent also makes a considerable difference in England but not in Scotland (see tables A3 and A4 in appendix). In England, the older the person, the more likely they are to reject the claim, and this holds for claims by whites and non-whites alike, albeit the gradient is less steep for white persons with an English accent and English parents (20 per cent among over 65s, and 12 per cent among 18-24 year olds; for non-white claims, the figures are 34 per cent and 19 per cent respectively). This pattern by age is not apparent in Scotland (17 per cent of over 65s would reject the claim made by a white person, compared with 20 per cent of 18-24 year olds; for non-white claims, the figures are 32 per cent and 33 per cent). In England, the youngest group (18-24) is less likely to reject claims at each level, be they by whites or non-whites, than their Scottish counterparts. The difference is however especially noticeable for non-whites where it persists into the 25-34 age group.

Social Class and Gender

Neither social class nor gender generates much variation as regards rejecting national identity claims. By social class, claims relating to white people show no clear gradient. In England, the pattern is much the same in the case of claims by non-whites but in Scotland the highest social class are rather less likely to reject claims at all three levels, and the bottom three classes more likely so to do. As regards gender, while there are small differences, the general pattern of rejection by men and women does not differ greatly. The tendency already discussed to reject non-white claims more than white claims is reproduced within each sex.

A Brief Summary

Taking these five variables of national identity, sex, age, social class and education one at a time, two things are fairly clear. Although there are differences, their impact is broadly similar in England and Scotland. There is no *a priori* reason why these five variables should produce strikingly different patterns in the two societies and the differences are less striking than the similarities. Secondly, although there is some variation by sex, age and social class, it is national identity and education that show the clearest patterns of differentiation.

Modelling The Data

These descriptive features are, of course, not independent of each other.

Educational attainment, for example, is not independent of age and social class.

While it is tempting to believe that a person's sense of national identity will have the major impact on whether they accept or reject claims by persons from the

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‘other’ country, be they white or non-white, with an ‘appropriate’ accent and parents, without further analysis we cannot say this with certainty.

We have modelled the data using binary logistic regression. The dependent variable is divided as above and we have modelled it with respect to ‘reject’. In the text however, for greater ease of comprehension, we have referred to lesser and greater degrees of acceptance. In England the reference category is ‘English not British’ and in Scotland, ‘Scottish not British’. We shall, as a shorthand, refer to these two groups as ‘exclusively English’ and ‘exclusively Scottish’.

Results From The Models^{xiii}

The results of the modelling exercise can be easily summarized. Structurally, the crucial variables are national identity (as measured by the ‘Moreno’ question), and education, overwhelmingly the effect of having a degree. However, the effect of national identity remains when education is brought into the model. This overall finding holds for claims by whites and non-whites alike and at all levels of ‘marker’. There are no significant differences by sex, and adding sex into the models does not change the ‘Moreno’ effect. In England, acceptance steadily decreases with age although this age effect is only significant in the two youngest groups. Introducing education into the model almost eliminates the age effect except in the youngest, under 25 age group where it remains significant. Although a similar gradient by age exists in Scotland, it is not significant at any level. As we saw in the tables earlier, the effects of class are not easily interpreted but it has little impact on the effects of national identity and, crucially, when education is brought into the model the effects of class disappear.

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5 National identity, then, has a clear effect on whether respondents accept or
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7 reject claims, and this persists regardless of the other variables brought into the
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9 model, be they sex, age, class or, most important, education which continues to
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11 exert an independent influence. Education sometimes reduces the effect of, but
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13 never becomes as statistically important as, national identity^{xiv}. In England the
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15 three groups at the British end of the scale are the ones more likely to accept
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17 claims, especially the exclusively British. In Scotland, the situation is complicated
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19 by the small numbers at the British end of the scale (4 per cent). Compared with
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21 the exclusive Scots, the 'Scottish more than British', and 'equally Scottish and
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23 British' groups are more likely to accept the claims; although the 'British more
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25 than Scottish' and 'British not Scottish' groups are even more likely so to do, the
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27 differences are not usually statistically significant. In England, while the 'English
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29 more than British' group is more accepting than the exclusively English, this
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31 difference is rarely significant, unlike the corresponding difference in Scotland. It
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33 is also the case that, unlike in Scotland, there is not always an increasing gradient
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35 of acceptance across the categories as one moves towards the British end, albeit
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37 the three most British groups are significantly more accepting than the exclusively
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39 English group. In England, then, the 'equally English and British' group form a
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41 kind of threshold, whereas in Scotland, the more British the identity the greater
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43 the contrast with the reference category of the exclusively Scottish.
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These effects of national identity persist in all the models. The contrasts with the reference category in England seem slightly stronger for non-white than white; in Scotland this is not generally the case.

In England the effect remains very similar as one adds in another marker; in Scotland the effect weakens as one adds in markers for whites, presumably because it is seen as increasingly self-evident to respondents that the hypothetical person must have been born in England. However, the effect remains much the same for non-whites.

The effect of having a degree, which in terms of education is what matters most, strengthens as one adds in markers in both countries and is stronger for non-whites than whites. This is in line with evidence that the experience of higher education, exposed to a wider range of ideas and beliefs, and encouraged to think critically and independently, encourages the development of liberal, tolerant views^{xv}. Such mind-sets appear to make people more accepting of the idea that the claim of someone to be English or Scottish is strengthened if they possess appropriate markers, be they white or non-white.

Conclusion

In conceptual terms, it is clear that respondents interviewed in the survey recognise the kind of model which we have developed over many years in terms of how people may make claims to national identity. The results are consistent, clearly patterned and reinforce what we have established in the qualitative studies. Our survey work enables us to put our previous findings in a statistical context, and to explore the data in ways which we could not do before.

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5 A willingness to accept claims increases as additional 'identity markers' are
6 introduced. Permanent residence alone is a relatively weak claim. When accent is
7 added, between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of people accept the claim, but
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9 introducing parentage, which implies a blood link, produces a further big increase
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11 in acceptance.
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16 It is a significant finding that Scotland and England are very similar in the
17 way in which respondents accept and reject hypothetical claims, be they by white
18 or non-white persons. These similarities are striking in the light of the differences
19
20 in the strength of national identity in the two countries, and arguably rather
21
22 different ways of construing identity. Small differences do exist between the two
23
24 countries, for instance in the slightly greater tendency for Scots to reject non-
25
26 white claims, but they must be understood in this general context of similarity.
27
28 Looking at the extreme groups, in both countries, the exclusive nationals are more
29
30 likely to reject claims from non-white than white people if they are not born in the
31
32 appropriate country. Are they being racist? Possibly, but they are also, and only
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34 slightly less, likely to reject claims from white people who are not born there.
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36 Place of birth seems to be the crucial criterion, a *sine qua non*, for the exclusive
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38 nationals.
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47 What have we learned about how the Scots and the English talk about
48 national identity? Is there any evidence that, because the Scots appear to have a
49
50 stronger sense of 'national' identity than the English, they are less likely to accept
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52 claims from those not born in the country, and/or from non-white people? We
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54 have shown that in both countries those with a stronger sense of national (English
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56 or Scottish) as opposed to state (British) identity are more difficult to satisfy about
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the validity of a claim. It is also intuitively satisfying that those whose personal sense of an identity is strongest, are more resistant to according others that identity. It is not so much thinking of yourself as English or Scottish that makes you more likely to reject claims, it's thinking of yourself in nationally exclusive terms. Some readers may find it unsurprising that those we might call 'extreme' English and Scottish nationals scrutinise applicants more carefully, but the history of empirical sociology has shown that findings are often only 'obvious' after the event. In our view, assumptions about findings in the absence of solid empirical evidence are all too common in sociology^{xvi}.

What about the idea that, notwithstanding the effect of national identity, other factors, such as a respondent's social class, education and so on, might play an equally or more important part in acceptance and rejection of claims, especially perhaps in England? The results of modelling the data are again unequivocal in both countries. Other factors do influence acceptance and rejection, but national identity remains the critical criterion in both countries. There is an educational effect, especially if the person has a degree, because such persons are likely to hold more liberal and tolerant views. This will then modify the tendency among the exclusively Scottish or English groups to require 'identity markers' of such potency that it borders on the unreasonable; it seems that non-whites might never satisfy some people in these groups. That the English do it just as much as the Scots is what is striking. They may be more likely to think of themselves in 'British' terms compared with the Scots, but there is little doubt that national identity matters to the English.

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5 Finally, there is what we might call the ‘so what?’ factor. Understanding in
6
7 the abstract what claims to their respective national identities people in England
8
9 and Scotland would accept or reject might not have much, if any, current
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11 behavioural significance. Does any of this have ‘political’ applications?
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14 It must be a matter of some concern that in both countries the rejection rate is
15
16 higher for non-whites. Admittedly this ‘prejudice’ may not translate into action on
17
18 the ground, but it is disturbing that some people in both countries are more
19
20 reluctant to accept non-whites than whites as ‘one of us’ if they were not born in
21
22 that country. Those who think of themselves as exclusively English or Scottish
23
24 seem especially likely to reject the claims of non-white people. When the data for
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26 BSA 2008 and SSA 2009 are both to hand we shall be able to explore this further
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28 because we shall have data relating to hypothetical persons who were both born
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30 and resident in England and Scotland.
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34 Plainly, the politics of national identity plays differently in each country.
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36 Being ‘English’ in England is not the stuff of party politics, whereas in Scotland it
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38 is. Those arguing for ‘English’ rights either in the form of separate arrangements
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40 for dealing with ‘English only’ legislation at Westminster, still less having an
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42 English parliament, remain on the fringes of the main political parties. The fear
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44 has been expressed that permitting the English to proclaim their national identity
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46 at the expense of being ‘British’ would mark the beginning of the end of the
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48 United Kingdom (Crick, 1989)^{xvii}. Gordon Brown’s speeches on ‘being British’
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50 can be seen in this light. What of the Scots? There is an SNP (minority)
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52 government at Holyrood, and it has proclaimed ‘pride in a strong, fair and
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54 inclusive national identity’ as one of its National Outcomes (Scottish Budget
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Spending Review 2007)^{xviii}. Such an ‘outcome’ runs the risk of contradicting itself. Our research suggests that the problem for the Scottish Government is that their goal of fostering a strong *inclusive* national identity involves changing the attitudes of exclusive Scots who are (marginally) more likely to reject claims from people not born in Scotland, be they white or non-white. Placing a strong emphasis on national identity may leave those without the conventional markers beyond the pale. Constitutional or political preferences cannot be read off from statements about such identities; and politicians seek to mobilise these at their peril. Such attempts are based on a failure to understand how people construe national and state identity. Implicitly they equate national identity with citizenship, which means having the right to vote, pay taxes, have your children educated, and generally participate fully in the ‘civic’ life of the country. This may seem sensible and straightforward, but it is based on a faulty premise. Citizenship is not the same as national identity. The latter involves cultural markers, of birth, ancestry, language as well as residence, and operates through complex processes of social interaction. Gaining a proper sociological understanding of the way people identify these markers, and the rules they employ to decide who is or is not ‘one of us’, and for what purposes, is not as straightforward as politicians and others believe but remains both intriguing and important.

ⁱ The authors are grateful to The Leverhulme Trust for supporting research on national identity since 1999, and in particular for their most recent grant enabling them to commission the National and the Scottish Centre for Social Research to ask the questions in the 2006 surveys. . We are also grateful to Lindsay Paterson

for his helpful comments on an earlier draft, and to the anonymous referees for theirs. David McCrone produced the first draft of the article, but it is the product of a collegiate form of working in which the data, the analysis and the drafts have been discussed by both authors throughout, and they are equally responsible for it.

ⁱⁱ We use this phrase intentionally to emphasise the *performative* aspect.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is a deliberate allusion to the work of early Chicago social interactionists and to Erving Goffman in particular, with their focus on the capacity of social actors to negotiate and mobilise identities when interacting with others in various social contexts. We find his work insightful in a general sense, without implying that we are following a specifically ‘Goffmanesque’ research strategy.

^{iv} One of the journal’s referees suggested that some of the findings below should be related to the theoretical literature on this topic.

^v ‘Race’ divides not simply into white and non-white, with different degrees of willingness to accept people within each of those broad racial groups, but our aim was to see whether ‘race’ made a difference at the broad aggregate level.

^{vi} We are grateful to one of the journal’s referees for suggesting we should address these important issues in this paper.

^{vii} The surveys are carried out on *residents* in Britain and Scotland but data on respondents’ place of birth makes the analysis possible.

^{viii} Named after the sociologist Luis Moreno who developed it from Juan Linz (Moreno, 1988). He later explained (Moreno, 2006) how ‘the question’ came about. As used in BSA 2006 and SSA 2006 it read as follows:

“Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?

[*English/Scottish/Welsh*] not British

More [*English/Scottish/Welsh*] than British

Equally [*English/Scottish/Welsh*] and British

More British than [*English/Scottish/Welsh*]

British not [*English/Scottish/Welsh*]

Other description (WRITE IN)

(None of these)”

^{ix} Condor and Abell observe that the interview talk about national issues which they analysed tended to be volatile, subject to rapid topic shading and drift. They comment (p.66): ‘(t)he category of nation itself tended to be very fragile. Rather than being construed as a “deep horizontal comradeship”, accounts of nation were liable to fragment as the speaker attended to class, ethnic or regional diversity’.

^x Throughout our survey work from 2003 to 2006, we did not ask people whether they would accept someone who claimed to be, say, English if they had been born in England and lived there permanently – the default position. We cannot be sure that everyone would do so. For some, simply being born in a country may not be enough; they may demand the appropriate ancestry going back generations. In the 2008 and 2009 surveys, we are asking this ‘default’ question to give us an accurate benchmark.

^{xi} This is a complex area and interpretation is beset with pitfalls. We have chosen to settle on the terms prejudice and discrimination because they embody the important distinction between attitudes and behaviour both of which may be involved in ‘racism’.

^{xii} In the British Election Study of 1997, 24 per cent of people in England described themselves as ‘mainly English’, 46 per cent as ‘equally English and

British', and 24 per cent as 'mainly British'. The comparable figures for ethnic minorities in England were 8 per cent, 20 per cent and 44 per cent respectively (British Election Study, 1997: Essex Data Archive).

^{xiii} We have modelled the data for Scottish and English natives, for claims by whites and non-whites, and for each of three 'levels' of marker of identity (residence; residence plus accent; residence plus accent plus parentage). There are twelve sets of models, each containing models first for the effect of national identity, national identity plus sex, and national identity plus sex plus age; and then for national identity plus class; national identity plus education, and national identity plus class plus education. Space precludes presenting all the models in this paper.

^{xiv} The order in which these variables are entered into the model makes little difference to the results, and statistical models cannot in general determine causality. However, it seems to us more plausible that national identity is the primary variable affecting acceptance of claims and it generally reduces the effect of education much more than education affects the impact of national identity.

^{xv} The political theorist Amy Gutmann (1987:173) commented: 'Learning how to think carefully and critically about political problems, to articulate one's views and defend them before people with whom one disagrees is a form of moral education to which young adults are more receptive [than school children] and for which universities are well suited.'

^{xvi} A fine example comes from the very early days of empirical sociological research. See Paul Lazarsfeld 'The American Soldier – an Expository Review', in Public Opinion Quarterly, 1949, p.380. We have used his insight in a very recent

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paper on national identity to make precisely this point (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009).

^{xvii} Crick (1989:29) observed: ‘For the English to have developed a strident literature of English nationalism, such as arose, often under official patronage, everywhere else in Europe, and in Ireland and Scotland, eventually in Wales, would have been divisive. From political necessity English politicians tried to develop a United Kingdom nationalism and, at least, explicitly and officially, to identify themselves with it, wholeheartedly.’

^{xviii} See : <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9>

APPENDIX

Tables A1, A2, A3 and A4 here

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TABLES

Table 1. *Measures of National Identity in England and Scotland, 2003 & 2006*

| % choosing 'English' in England (<i>'Scottish' in Scotland in brackets and italics</i>) | 2003 | 2006 | percentage point difference 2003- 06 |
|--|---------|---------|--|
| Multiple choice | 68 (94) | 80 (94) | +12 (0) |
| Forced choice | 45 (83) | 57(90) | +12 (+7) |
| Moreno: only or mainly English (<i>Scottish</i>) | 40 (73) | 37 (73) | -3 (0) |
| Moreno: equally English (<i>Scottish</i>) & British | 34 (22) | 46 (21) | +12 (-1) |

Table 2. *Acceptance and rejection in England of claims to be English by a person born in Scotland*

| % by column | white | White with English accent | White, English accent, & English parents | Non- white | Non- white with English accent | Non-white, English accent, & English parents |
|-------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|--|
| Definitely would | 13 | 18 | 35 | 13 | 17 | 28 |
| Probably would | 32 | 42 | 46 | 32 | 39 | 44 |
| Probably would not | 30 | 22 | 10 | 30 | 23 | 15 |
| Definitely would not | 22 | 16 | 7 | 21 | 18 | 10 |
| DK/NA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| base | 2314 | 2314 | 2314 | 2314 | 2314 | 2314 |

Table 3. *Acceptance and rejection in Scotland of claims to be Scottish by a person born in England*

| % by column | white | White with Scottish accent | White, Scottish accent, & Scottish parents | Non- white | Non- white with Scottish accent | Non-white, Scottish accent, & Scottish parents |
|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|---|--|
| Definitely would | 14 | 19 | 37 | 12 | 15 | 26 |
| Probably would | 30 | 39 | 44 | 26 | 35 | 42 |
| Probably would not | 30 | 24 | 12 | 31 | 26 | 18 |
| Definitely would not | 25 | 16 | 6 | 28 | 22 | 11 |
| DK/NA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| base | 1302 | 1302 | 1302 | 1302 | 1302 | 1302 |

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Table 4. *Percentage within national identity category rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England: 'National'=English | | | | Scotland: 'National'=Scottish | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--|------|
| | White | White with English accent | White, English accent, & English parents | base | White | White with Scottish accent | White, Scottish accent, & Scottish parents | base |
| 'National' not British | 64 | 51 | 26 | 466 | 64 | 50 | 22 | 485 |
| More 'National' than British | 62 | 45 | 19 | 363 | 52 | 35 | 16 | 459 |
| Equally 'National' & British | 46 | 31 | 14 | 1042 | 46 | 36 | 15 | 271 |
| More British than 'National' | 48 | 34 | 16 | 162 | 56 | 37 | 18 | 27 |
| British not 'National' | 52 | 45 | 17 | 137 | 65 | 65 | 53 | 17 |
| all | 53 | 39 | 18 | 2170 | 56 | 41 | 18 | 1259 |

Note: base excludes missing cases

Table 5. *Percentage within national identity category rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from non-white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England: 'National'=English | | | | Scotland: 'National'=Scottish | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|------|
| | Non-white | Non-white with English accent | Non-white, English accent, & English parents | base | Non-white | Non-white with Scottish accent | Non-white, Scottish accent, & Scottish parents | base |
| 'National' not British | 69 | 58 | 39 | 466 | 68 | 56 | 37 | 485 |
| More 'National' than British | 61 | 49 | 29 | 363 | 59 | 42 | 25 | 459 |
| Equally 'National' & British | 46 | 34 | 20 | 1042 | 50 | 43 | 23 | 271 |
| More British than 'National' | 47 | 36 | 22 | 162 | 61 | 48 | 33 | 27 |
| British not 'National' | 44 | 40 | 22 | 137 | 72 | 72 | 50 | 17 |
| all | 53 | 42 | 26 | 2170 | 61 | 48 | 30 | 1259 |

Note: base excludes missing cases

Table 6. *Beta coefficients for models of national identity and education in England and Scotland*
ENGLAND

| | | W | W+A | W+A+P | NW | NW+A | NW+A+P |
|-----------|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Step 1(a) | national identity | | | | | | |
| | E > B | -.051 | -.209 | -.374 | -.302 | -.298 | -.340 |
| | E=B | -.686 | -.799 | -.696 | -.921 | -.968 | -.817 |
| | E<B | -.559 | -.589 | -.481 | -.787 | -.755 | -.600 |
| | B not E | -.447 | -.193 | -.374 | -.944 | -.623 | -.605 |
| | education | | | | | | |
| | Degree | -.563 | -.544 | -1.073 | -.766 | -.934 | -1.365 |
| | HE below degree | -.117 | -.025 | -.306 | -.306 | -.336 | -.567 |
| | Upper secondary certificate | -.311 | -.308 | -.148 | -.602 | -.636 | -.571 |
| | Lower secondary certificate | -.250 | -.196 | -.332 | -.287 | -.397 | -.531 |
| | Certificate lower than lower secondary | -.258 | -.307 | -.242 | -.359 | -.517 | -.400 |
| | Constant | .777 | .217 | -.824 | 1.111 | .700 | -.069 |

Note: W=White NW=non-white A= accent P= parentage; figures in bold are those which are statistically significant.

SCOTLAND

| | | W | W+A | W+A+P | NW | NW+A | NW+A+P |
|-----------|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Step 1(a) | national identity | | | | | | |
| | S > B | -.444 | -.547 | -.309 | -.260 | -.457 | -.442 |
| | S=B | -.665 | -.493 | -.377 | -.636 | -.391 | -.519 |
| | S<B | -.335 | -.567 | -.345 | -.275 | -.333 | -.174 |
| | B not S | .020 | .590 | 1.514 | .182 | .719 | .664 |
| | education | | | | | | |
| | Degree | -.677 | -.928 | -1.156 | -1.038 | -1.283 | -1.366 |
| | HE below degree | -.352 | -.487 | -.348 | -.564 | -.864 | -.682 |
| | Upper secondary certificate | -.416 | -.339 | -.641 | -.792 | -.885 | -.814 |
| | Lower secondary certificate | -.129 | -.468 | -.610 | -.364 | -.712 | -.648 |
| | Certificate lower than lower secondary | -.382 | -.376 | -.428 | -.459 | -.380 | -.613 |
| | Constant | .853 | .328 | -.867 | 1.219 | .811 | -.001 |

Table A1. *Percentage within each educational group rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England | | | | Scotland | | | |
|--|---------|----------------|-------------------------|------|----------|----------------|-------------------------|------|
| Highest education level attained | white | White & accent | White, accent & parents | base | white | White & accent | White, accent & parents | base |
| Degree | 45 | 32 | 8 | 369 | 44 | 27 | 10 | 196 |
| HE below degree | 55 | 42 | 17 | 261 | 54 | 38 | 20 | 156 |
| Upper secondary certificate | 50 | 36 | 19 | 401 | 53 | 43 | 16 | 267 |
| Lower secondary certificate | 53 | 39 | 17 | 479 | 62 | 41 | 17 | 176 |
| Certificate lower than lower secondary | 54 | 38 | 19 | 207 | 54 | 41 | 19 | 164 |
| No qualifs. | 60 | 45 | 23 | 522 | 63 | 51 | 26 | 309 |
| all | 53 | 39 | 18 | 2239 | 56 | 41 | 19 | 1268 |

Note: percentages exclude missing cases

Table A2. *Percentage within each educational group rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from non-white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England | | | | Scotland | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| Highest education level attained | Non-white | Non-white & accent | Non-white, accent & parents | base | Non-white | Non-white & accent | Non-white, accent & parents | base |
| Degree | 42 | 30 | 13 | 369 | 47 | 32 | 17 | 196 |
| HE below degree | 52 | 43 | 24 | 261 | 59 | 42 | 27 | 156 |
| Upper secondary certificate | 47 | 36 | 23 | 401 | 55 | 43 | 26 | 267 |
| Lower secondary certificate | 55 | 43 | 25 | 479 | 66 | 48 | 30 | 176 |
| Certificate lower than lower secondary | 54 | 41 | 28 | 207 | 63 | 55 | 30 | 164 |
| No qualifs. | 63 | 54 | 37 | 522 | 73 | 64 | 44 | 309 |
| all | 53 | 42 | 26 | 2239 | 61 | 48 | 30 | 1268 |

Note: percentages exclude missing cases

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Table A3. *Percentage within each age group rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England | | | | Scotland | | | |
|-------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|------|----------|----------------|-------------------------|------|
| | white | White & accent | White, accent & parents | base | white | White & accent | White, accent & parents | base |
| 18-24 | 43 | 27 | 12 | 275 | 53 | 40 | 20 | 142 |
| 25-34 | 49 | 32 | 13 | 380 | 51 | 33 | 14 | 184 |
| 35-44 | 53 | 37 | 18 | 462 | 55 | 40 | 19 | 247 |
| 45-54 | 55 | 45 | 22 | 332 | 58 | 45 | 22 | 234 |
| 55-64 | 59 | 45 | 19 | 353 | 61 | 46 | 20 | 202 |
| 65+ | 58 | 45 | 20 | 458 | 54 | 43 | 17 | 273 |
| all | 53 | 39 | 18 | 2260 | 56 | 41 | 19 | 1282 |

Note: percentages exclude missing cases

Table A4. *Percentage within each age group rejecting claim to be English (Scottish) from non-white person born in Scotland (England)*

| | England | | | | Scotland | | | |
|-------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| | Non-white | Non-white & accent | Non-white, accent & parents | base | Non-white | Non-white & accent | Non-white, accent & parents | base |
| 18-24 | 45 | 31 | 19 | 275 | 65 | 48 | 33 | 142 |
| 25-34 | 47 | 35 | 17 | 380 | 54 | 40 | 24 | 184 |
| 35-44 | 52 | 37 | 22 | 462 | 60 | 43 | 26 | 247 |
| 45-54 | 54 | 44 | 29 | 332 | 60 | 54 | 31 | 234 |
| 55-64 | 57 | 49 | 30 | 353 | 66 | 52 | 33 | 202 |
| 65+ | 60 | 53 | 34 | 458 | 63 | 54 | 32 | 273 |
| all | 53 | 42 | 26 | 2260 | 61 | 49 | 30 | 1282 |

Note: percentages exclude missing cases